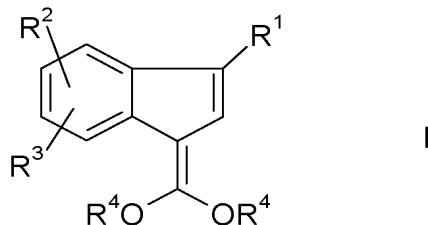
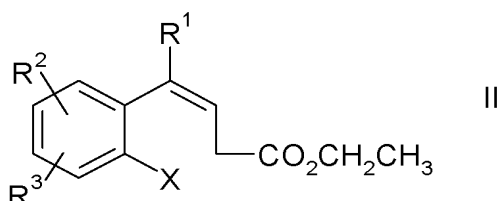


In the Claims:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) An improved process for preparing a compound of the formula



which comprises: (a) conducting a solvent-free reaction between a compound of formula



and a monohydric alcohol of formula R^4 OH wherein R^4 is C_1 to C_6 alkyl or a dihydric alcohol wherein said dihydric alcohol is selected from the group consisting of ethylene glycol, 1,3-propylene glycol, and 1,2-propylene glycol, in the presence of sulfuric acid; and

(b) treating the reaction product with [[a base]] ammonium hydroxide and water to neutralize residual sulfuric acid;

wherein R^1 is an electron withdrawing group selected from the group consisting of cyano, alkoxycarbonyl, alkylcarbonyl, aryl, nitro, trifluoromethyl, and sulfonyl;

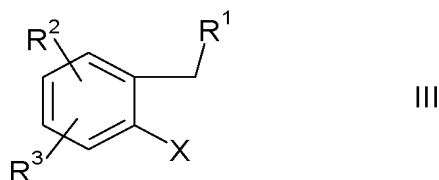
R^2 and R^3 are selected independently from hydrogen, C_1 - C_5 alkyl, C_1 - C_5 alkoxy, trifluoromethyl, halogen, sulfonyl alkyl, alkyamino, amide, ester, aryl-alkyl, and aryl-alkoxy;

~~or R^2 and R^3 together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a monocyclic or bicyclic ring;~~

and X is selected from the group consisting of chlorine, bromine, and iodine; and wherein said improved process results in about 90% yield and about 80% to 99% in purity of said compound of formula I.

Claim 2. (Cancelled)

Claim 3. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1 wherein said compound of formula II is prepared by (a) reacting a compound of formula III



with ethyl 3-ethoxyacrylate in the presence of a ~~[[metal]]~~ catalyst, wherein said catalyst is a mixture of palladium II acetate, tricyclohexylphosphine and ~~[[base]]~~ sodium t-butoxide; and an inert water miscible solvent selected from the group consisting of tetrahydrofuran, 2-methyltetrahydrofuran, and 1,2-dimethoxy ethane and (b) completely removing said solvent upon completion of said reaction, wherein said solvent is removed by distillation; wherein

R¹ is an electron withdrawing group selected from the group consisting of cyano, alkoxy-carboxyl, alkylcarbonyl, arylcarbonyl, aryl, nitro, trifluoromethyl, and sulfonyl; and X is selected from the group consisting of chlorine, bromine, and iodine; and

R² and R³ are selected independently from hydrogen, C₁ to C₅ alkyl, C₁ to C₅ alkoxy, trifluoromethyl, halogen, sulfonyl alkyl, alkyamino, amide, ester, aryl-alkyl, and aryl-alkoxy[[:]]

~~or R² and R³ together with carbon atoms to which they are attached form a monocyclic or bicyclic ring.~~

Claim 4. (Cancelled)

Claim 5. (Cancelled)

Claim 6. (Cancelled)

Claim 7. (Currently amended) The process according to claim ~~[[6]]~~ 3 wherein said dihydric alcohol is ethylene glycol.

Claim 8. (Cancelled)

Claim 9. (Currently amended) The process according to claim ~~[[8]]~~ 3 wherein said inert water miscible organic solvent is tetrahydrofuran.

Claim 10. (Cancelled)

Claim 11. (Currently amended) The process according to claim 1 wherein the compound of the formula I is 3-[1,3] dioxolan-2-ylidene-3H-indene-1-carbonitrile.

Claim 12. (Cancelled)

Claim 13. (Cancelled)

Claim 14. (Previously presented) The process according to claim 1 wherein said dihydric alcohol is ethylene glycol and said base is ammonium hydroxide.

Claim 15. (Currently amended) The process according to claim 14 wherein said compound of formula I is 3-[1,3] dioxolan-2-ylidene-3H-indene-1-carbonitrile.

Claim 16. (Currently amended) The process according to claim 3 wherein said catalyst is a mixture of palladium II acetate, tricyclohexylphosphine, and a sodium t-butoxide, said inert miscible solvent is tetrahydrofuran; and wherein said alcohol is a dihydric alcohol selected from ethylene glycol.

Claim 17. (Currently amended) The process according to claim 16 wherein said compound of formula I is 3-[1,3] dioxolan-2-ylidene-3H-indene-1-carbonitrile.